

The Evening News, Salem, Mass., Monday, May 10, 1999 A13

Town

More Tri-Town
news, page A16

EPA finishes cleaning up old glue factory on School Street

By BETSY TAYLOR
News staff

MIDDLETON — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has completed a four-month, \$450,000 cleanup at a former glue factory on School Street.

The agency removed more than 500 barrels of chemicals used in the manufacture of glue, including acetone and toluene.

"There is still a fair amount of groundwater contamination beneath the site," said Erin Heskett, a community involvement coordinator for the EPA.

He said that neighborhood residents have expressed concerns, and should continue to follow the matter. But test results in the area have not shown cause to believe the site has affected anyone's health.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection will test groundwater in the upcoming weeks to determine the type and extent of contamination.

The site, cleaned up with Superfund money, had posed a threat due to the flammable nature of the chemicals within and the deterioration of the barrels.

Yesterday, EPA officials gave a tour of the cleaned-up site. From 1970 through the 1980s, the 3.2-acre site was used to manufacture adhesives, first by Glennon-American, Inc., and then the American Glue and Resin Company.

The windows remain boarded up at the 40 School St. plant and the interior of the 10,000-square-foot building shows signs of disrepair.

But what is more significant, officials said, is what is no longer visible. They have tested and repackaged 511 drums containing more than 3,000 pounds of contaminated sludge and 660 gallons of contaminated liquids. The chemicals were moved to hazardous-waste facilities in New Jersey and Michigan.

Gilberto Irizarry, the EPA's on-scene coordinator, said: "There were a couple of trenches within the building with sludge, which we sampled." Some just held water; others contained chemicals. All were cleaned out.

One pit was 3 or 4 feet across and about 4 or 5 feet deep. The pits appeared to have had secure floors.

As part of the cleanup, the EPA has tested dirt around the factory. Heskett said they found that surface soil adjacent to the factory was contaminated in areas. That soil has been removed.

The agency dug 4-foot test pits and found no indication of contamination at deeper levels — a good sign, Heskett said.

But the DEP will come to the site in a few weeks to monitor contamination in the groundwater, which flows toward Boston Brook. Samples taken since 1985 have shown declining concentrations of contamination.

Steve Roberson of the DEP said

the site has not been fully evaluated, but state officials are concerned about the pollution's affect on the brook.

Residential well water has been tested over the years; and in the late 1980s, one well, for a house at 34 School St., did show contamination.

"The town did declare it unfit for habitation, until it was connected to a public water line, which was subsequently done," Roberson said.

Further testing of neighborhood wells had showed no reason to believe the chemicals had affected other local well water. And several houses on the street also have been connected to water lines.

The EPA officials do not know what will become of the building, now that the site has been cleaned up.

"The EPA tries to recover its costs. That's something that goes on between the EPA and the property owners," said Irizarry. Property owners had cooperated with cleanup efforts over the years, officials said.

Patricia Auterio, who is responsible for paying property taxes at the site, could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Heskett asked that any residents with questions call him at the EPA's toll-free number, (888) 372-7341; or through his direct line, (617) 918-1054. He mailed information to residents Friday.

Superfund Records Center
SITE: American Glue
BREAK: 13.3
OTHER: 469655



SDMS DocID

469655